Marshall-Motley Scholars Program

FULL TRANSCRIPT

[upbeat music]


Angela Winfield: Hello, everyone, and welcome. My name is Angela Winfield. I'm the vice president and chief diversity officer for the Law School Admission Council, LSAC. And it's my pleasure to welcome you to this webinar, where we will be discussing the NAACP LDF's Marshall-Motley Scholars Program. Before I introduce our fabulous panelists today and we get into the substance of the conversation, we have a short video that we'd like to show you.

Speaker: In the civil rights movement's earliest days, Thurgood Marshall formed the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. For over 80 years in courtrooms across the country, our attorneys have relentlessly fought for the rights we have today. Having those rights, keeping those rights, that belong to every American takes work, commitment. It is indeed a calling. At a time when those rights are more threatened than ever, our work matters more than ever. That's why today we are honored to introduce the very first Marshall-Motley Scholars, named for our founder, Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, and the iconic litigator Judge Constance Baker Motley. Scholars are from different backgrounds, yet share the same commitment to uphold, maintain, and protect our civil rights. To answer the call and bring an end to racial injustice.

Shandrea Sellers: Racial justice and choice-filled lives are not mutually exclusive.

Briana Hayes: As long as I live, I live to fight for freedom.

Markus Reneau: Racial justice in education is when Black students are provided with equitable access to quality public education.

Ashley Fox: In every space, my mission is also to connect with people in ways that ultimately create more just and inclusive communities.
Traelon Rodgers: Since the age of 11, I have been committed to fighting for equality and justice in the South.

Victor Olofin: In this society, poverty should not be criminalized.

Dominique Erney: I am in the fight for racial justice on behalf of Black people.

Kendell Long: I want to be a leader that is a connector between coalitions and builds efficacy and communities by using the law to fuel material change that is larger than me or what any one individual can do.

Princess Jefferson: I intend to offer my voice, visibility, and assure the experiences of my community.

Maydrian Strozier-Lowe: It's about changing the narrative and the dynamic and the systemic outlook for African-Americans.

Jino Ray: Good evening. How are you, Ashley?

Ashley: Hi. Doing well. How are you all?

Jino: Doing wonderful.

Speaker 1: Good. Good to see you.

Speaker 2: We really recognize how rigorous this process was, and it's one of the reasons why we wanted to just be able to talk to finalists personally. But I also wanted to reach out, because I wanted to congratulate you on having been selected as a Marshall-Motley scholar.

Ashley: I'm not crying. [laughing]

Speaker 2: I'm not crying, you're crying. For having been selected as a Marshall-Motley Scholar.

Markus: Wait, wait, wait.

Maydrian: I was sitting here, I was like, she going to tell me I didn't get it, the way she was going. She built me up and like [laughs].

Speaker 1: Sherilyn Ifill, oh, hey there.
Speaker 3: How you doing?
Speaker 1: Hi! How are you?
Speaker 2: How are you?
Speaker 1: You can unmute.
Adria: Unmute yourself.
Jino: You can unmute yourself now [laughs].
Traelon: Thank you. That’s really awesome news. Especially two days before my graduation ceremony.
Speaker 2: Yes, I would think. I would think.
Victor: I can't wait to get to work for the Marshall-Motley Scholars Program, and it's just an honor to be a part of the inaugural cohort.
Speaker 2: Congratulations, Marshall-Motley Scholars. Now let's get to work.
[inspirational music]
Angela: Wow, that is so powerful. And I think all of you today, thank you, who are showing up, have been called, and maybe it will be you who gets the call to say that you are a part of the next Marshall-Motley Scholars cohort. But today we are going to learn more about what it means to be a Marshall-Motley Scholar. We are also going to speak with some of the scholars. So without further ado, let me tell you a little bit more about who we’re going to be speaking with. So as I said, my name is Angela Winfield. I’m the vice president and chief diversity officer for the Law School Admission Council. And as part of LSAC’S mission, we are here to support diverse, talented individuals from prelaw through practice. And one of the ways that we do that is by partnering with and featuring programs like this that can serve and support you on your journey to being legal professionals and attorneys.

Today we have with us, from the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Adria Kimbrough, the student recruiting manager for the Marshall-Motley Scholars Program. And prior to that she was a prelaw, the prelaw advisor at Dillard University. We also have two of the Marshall-Motley Scholars. We have Ashley Fox and we have Traelon Rodgers. We are going to have a chance to speak with them all. And first we’re going to start with Adria
and get a little bit more background. Adria, that video was just fabulous, but for those who don't know, can you share with us, what is LDF? What is the Legal Defense Fund?

Adria Kimbrough: Thank you so much, Angela. Thank you all for being here. Angela, thank you for having us here. And the video really is just remarkable. I never get tired of seeing it, but, just to get started with your question about, you know, who is LDF, who's the Legal Defense Fund? We are indeed the nation's premier civil rights law firm in this country, founded in 1940 by Thurgood Marshall, who most know as the first Black Supreme Court justice. And we are excited about what we're here to talk about today, but certainly in reverence for the history and the legacy of our organization. Most people know the Brown v. Board of Education case. That is the seminal case, I think, in terms of our history and legacy, and that legacy continues in the work that we do today.

Angela: Thank you so much for that background. And we're going to get into the actual part about the program. And let me say now that we're going to try and cover as much as we can. There will be a time for questions at the end of this conversation, and we will try to get to as many of those as we can. You can feel free to put them into the chat. We also have a team of folks from Marshall-Motley Scholars Program and LDF, as well as LSAC, on the back end who are going to try and answer as many of the questions as we can. So please know and feel free to enter those questions, and know that we'll save some time at the end. So now let's talk about this program itself. It just sounds fabulous. The video's fabulous, and I've read a lot about the program. Adria, can you just tell us a little bit more about what the program is, and why now for it?

Adria: Yeah, so the Marshall-Motley Scholars Program, as you may suspect, is named in honor of our founder, Thurman Marshall, but also the iconic litigator, Constance Baker Motley. And the idea behind the program is really a connection to our legacy and our past in working on behalf of Black communities in the South. And so the program is designed to create the next generation of individuals who will continue that work, working on behalf of Black communities in the South in pursuit of racial justice. And so the program is designed to create the next generation of individuals who will continue that work, working on behalf of Black communities in the South in pursuit of racial justice. So our aim is to identify those individuals and to support them in their pursuit to this work. You sort of referenced a calling, perhaps, and I think some of our scholars do see it in that way of calling to do this work and to really remove, at least on our part, to remove some of the barriers that often exist between students who have this as the reason that they want to go to law school and the financial barriers and systemic barriers that often exist from students being able to actualize that calling and their goal of being able to work on behalf of racial justice or in pursuit of racial justice on behalf of Black communities and to use their law degree in this way.
Angela: Absolutely, that's fabulous and so important because the work itself is needed. And I think most of you who are on this call know that it's needed, and that may be why you're here, but there are barriers to doing that work. So I am just grateful for the program, because we've got to reduce the challenges and the obstacles to doing the work that is so necessary. So you're not only, you know, helping to reduce the barriers by building the program and being a part of the program, but the program itself does that as well. So I'd now like to invite in the scholars, so that we can all learn about what it is, like, who are these folks? We saw them in the video, but we want to know a little bit more about you all. So we've got Ashley Fox and we've got Traelon Rodgers here. I'm going to start with you, Ashley. Could you just introduce yourself, please tell us where you're from, what law school are you attending?

Ashley Fox: Sure. Ashley Fox. I'm a native Tennessean, born in Knoxville, raised in Nashville, and I'm currently back in Tennessee at Vanderbilt Law School.

Angela: OK, and where did you do your undergrad? Ashley: I went to Washington University in St. Louis.

Angela: OK. Thank you. And Traelon, how about you? Where are you from? Where'd you do your undergrad, and where are you going to law school?

Traelon Rodgers: Good morning. My name is Traelon Rodgers. I'm from Texas, born and raised in Arlington, and I went to Dillard University in New Orleans, Louisiana. And I currently attend Berkeley, the University of California-Berkeley Law School.

Angela: Fantastic. And Traelon, let's stay with you for this one. Why were you interested in applying for the Marshall-Motley Scholars Program?

Traelon: Yeah, so, as the video that just played said, I've been doing, been fighting for racial justice and equality for, since I was 11 years old. And at the time of that video, I think I may have been 22 or 21, so I've been doing it for more than half of my life. And I've served in various capacities. My first time, I remember, Troy Davis was executed in Georgia, and that was a turning point for me that made me realize that in order to get racial equality in America, we'd have to do some serious work. We'd have to be very proactive. And so I took a stance then, and I joined the NAACP, and I've been with them ever since. I've served in several leadership capacities. In 2017, there was a boy named Jordan Edwards, who was 15 years old at the time, was shot in Dallas. And I remember that moment in my life. And that was one of those moments where it was tangible, because he was 15, I was 17 at the time, and it was just very realistic. Like, it wasn't
happening to folks who were 40 and 50, not to say that their lives don’t matter, but it was happening to somebody who was very close in age to me. And we had several mutual friends, because we were at high schools close by. And so from that moment on, I realized that not only did I want to be a civil rights activist, but I wanted to be a civil rights attorney. And so when this program opened up, I mean, it was just like it had my name written on it. And being from the South, I knew I wanted to be back in the South. I knew I wanted to practice and litigate in the South, and I wanted to litigate on behalf of people that looked like me. And so I signed up, and it was just as, I mean, it was just almost like it was meant to be. And so it happened and here I am.

Angela: Wonderful, wonderful. You know, it’s personal, and I can tell that you have the passion. So thank you for sharing that. And Ashley, will you share with us, how did you get interested in becoming a Marshall-Motley Scholar, and why did you apply?

Ashley: Sure. So my path is a little bit non-traditional. I started law school at 30. When I graduated, I migrated over to D.C. and I worked in kind of legislative work and political work. It looked very different than my life back at home. So my family is originally from Mississippi, three generations - my parents, my grandparents, and my great-grandparents, four of whom I knew - and my life growing up looked very different in Nashville than it did when I went and spent my summers with my family in Mississippi. And those disparities were really what drove me to want to do policy work in the first place. So when I spent time working in D.C., I was doing local work, and it really became clear that it wasn't just policy that had the ability to change people's lives and people's outcomes, it was really the law. And so I became interested in law school, and D.C. is a majority-minority city. Mississippi also has a very large Black population. And what that looks like on the ground is very, very different. It started to drive me to think about how I can actually be more impactful in the Black community specifically. And I too knew I wanted to go back and work in the South. So when the program became available, it looked like the perfect opportunity to both pursue going to law school and also doing work in the South on behalf of African-Americans.

Angela: Wonderful, thank you. And Ashley, what has been the most impactful aspect of being a Marshall-Motley Scholar so far? I know you're just early in your journey, but so far, what would you point to as being the most impactful part of this?

Ashley: Sure. There's so many things. I mean, watching the video inspires me all over again, but I have to say the community first. I mean, there's the obvious, you know, financial support that comes, that's indescribable. But I think it's the community first and
foremost. So the leadership, and both Ms. Kimbrough and the director, Jino Ray, their vision is really one that is community-centered and we are unapologetically about the mission. We have been told over and over and over again that you are on assignment. And the constant reminder and support system that comes through the program has really been the most valuable part for me.

Angela: Fantastic, and Traelon, what about you? What has been the most impactful aspect of the program so far?

Traelon: I think everything that Ashley said is the same for me. I mean, I could say it in different ways, but I mean, number one, the community is just amazing. We started off with 10 folks and those nine people, we're just so close, and we've got 10 new folks who we're developing a relationship with, but the community's excellent. Even outside of our Marshall-Motley community, there is a greater community of attorneys and civil rights activists and social justice activists that we have access to as a result of this program. And then, as she said, that leadership is great, and as well as the resources financially that we have at this program is also great. So I think Ashley hit it right spot on. And I think I agree completely that this program has so many things about it that is wonderful and that propels us and allows us to be successful, not only in law school, but I'm assuming, and I'm confident, that it'll be the same in our career.

Angela: Absolutely. This was a program that was built with intention, right? It was built for students that have the passion and commitment that you have, with your needs in mind, and that community that the both of you are talking about is so incredibly important. You know, that's what allows students like you and future leaders like you to build that confidence, right? The community is incredible in keeping you motivated, keeping you on the path, being able to learn from that, and also just to begin to live into your potential. So I think you both are right. You hit the nail on the head with that. It's important to have that community, and that's built into this program. So can you, Traelon, share with us some of the experiences that you've had? We've talked about the impact in a broad sense, but can you share just, you know, an example of, you know, what's it like to be a part of that cohort and, you know, what's it like to engage with those leaders and attorneys who are already out there practicing? Can you share a story or two with us?

Traelon: Yeah, I think one of the best stories I could say thus far is the ability to, I think, so this summer I interned at the ACLU of Louisiana, which is a partner of the LDF. And we were able to meet a number of people who were practicing. We talked to the folks
who were working on some of the voting rights cases this summer at our retreat, and it was eye-opening to hear. I’ve sort of become pessimistic after some of the recent decisions that have been made, at least by the Supreme Court. And they basically just said, don’t give up yet. We still got, specifically, the Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, which was talking about gerrymandering based on race. And so I was like, yeah, well, they’re going to gut it. And I remember distinctively, they were saying, don’t lose hope. We still got the law that stands currently, there is still protection for racial minorities in this country as it relates to voting rights, as it relates to voting. And that was a moment for me, it was just like, wow, OK, so the people who are on the ground who are fighting for this, and despite what we saw in this past Supreme Court term, I still have hope. And it made me have hope and sort of changed my outlook.

And even after listening to the oral arguments that were maybe, I don’t know, maybe about two or three weeks ago, after hearing those oral arguments, there was reason to have hope. And even with the affirmative action cases coming up, I think there is no doubt in that Black and brown students are admitted at lower rates than other people. And so to hear the attorneys from those cases talk about what they had to motivate them to move forward and to litigate those cases, despite what we saw this past term, and despite what we’ve had historically in terms of affirmative action cases. So I think that was a real tangible moment, where I was able to speak to attorneys who were already doing the work that said to me, you know, in any situation, but particularly in this one, no matter what it looks like, the job is the job.

Our job is to continue to litigate the cases, try the cases, argue the cases, and hope for the best outcome and leave it all in the courtroom. And then also to have a multifaceted approach. One of the strategies is also to affirm some of these rights in the state courts and in the state legislatures. And so they made me see the bigger picture, that it’s bigger than just the Supreme Court, that you can do it in state Supreme Courts, the state courts, the state legislature, and to always remain hopeful no matter what the situation looks like. And that for me was one of the more tangible moments of this program that lets me know, like, OK, I’m working with the right people and I’m with the right group of people who have the same vision as me and want the same end as I do.

**Angela:** Incredible. It sounds like that was a pivotal experience for you and it’s given you perspective not only on what we see from the outside with Supreme Court cases and the decisions, but really what’s happening, like you said, on the ground and speaking with those attorneys and getting their perspective, so you can have a holistic view of how to do this work and also how to keep yourself motivated. That’s incredible.
Ashley, what about you? Can you share with us a story or two about some of your experiences, maybe your internship, or something that was poignant for you?

**Ashley:** Sure, you know, I think I might go back and amend my earlier answer, too, about what's most helpful with the program and what's been really impactful. Very close second would really be the summer internship experiences and the training, the very hands-on training that we get, that is a very intentional process, and Traelon has already, you know, started to allude to how directly impactful the summer experiences can be when you're really aligned with your longer-term mission. So similarly, I had the pleasure of interning with Traelon at the ACLU of Louisiana. And so I echo a lot of his experience there, but I think more directly, the organization was a Black-woman-led organization. Growing up in Tennessee, I did not have a very diverse experience in the classroom. I had my very first Black professor in college, and the opportunity to work for an organization that was being led by somebody who looks like me, first and foremost, and somebody who unapologetically was working toward racial justice and on behalf of Black people, of course all Louisianans, but also on behalf of Black people, that was extremely impactful, just from an empowerment standpoint. And I think also from a historical standpoint, because when we learn about history, the history of the South in particular, from people who have experienced it differently, it gives you a very different perspective on the work.

So in addition to some of the people that we interacted with in the legal space over the summer, we also took time to do, essentially, kind of, trips to historical sites around Louisiana. And I know this is true of other people's experiences as well in the cohort, in other places. And that really undergirded the legal experience that we were getting at the internship, just in not only understanding kind of the racism behind a lot of what our legislatures look like and laws that are on the books, but also understanding where we get our inspiration from and why we do the work that we do. And so to Traelon's point about it being very multidimensional, I think it's a unique part of the summer experience through the program and one that is almost indescribable in terms of its importance and its impact.

**Angela:** Thank you so much for that. Your stories and experiences add so much flavor to what it's like to be a scholar. If you could, Ashley, and this may be a difficult question, but based on your experience and what you've seen other of your 1L colleagues at law school go through, how would you compare your experience being a part of the Marshall-Motley Scholars Program to theirs?
Ashley: Sure. It's definitely unique. So, adding to the list of things that I feel extremely privileged to get to enjoy as benefits of the program is also the academic support. So, throughout the semester there is academic support that's provided in addition to, you know, coaching, and the LDF staff, the Marshall-Motley team, is available throughout the semester to provide, you know, academic support, answer questions. So for me, in addition to being a non-traditional student, kind of in the broader spectrum of just the demographics of the class, I think the program allowed me, honestly, the freedom to focus solely on the end goal. When a lot of people are working toward jobs and applying for jobs really early in the semester and trying to build relationships with professors to make sure that they have references. All of those things are important and have value, but the program gave me the freedom to really focus on class, only focus on class, and then not worry about what was going to come over the summer. It also gave me the freedom to not be beholden, honestly, to the traditional law school structure, which is very, very difficult, and particularly for people who are interested in doing public interest work, and within that, interested in doing civil rights work.

You know, going to school in the South was a specific choice on my part, and part of that, I knew, would not be maybe, you know, the robust civil rights experience in the traditional law school structure that I was seeking. And the program filled that gap. So in addition to, I think, being able to, you know, learn the doctrinal courses and learn the doctrinal material, the program kind of supplemented all of those things and the questions that I was having and the social conversations that I wanted to have around those doctrinal classes in other ways that you wouldn't necessarily get just, and this is not specific to Vanderbilt, but I think in any traditional law school format.

Angela: Thank you. I just love how you said it, I'm going to repeat it. The freedom to focus on the outcome, the freedom to focus on your goals, to focus on the classroom. I don't think that you can say it any better than that. That really encapsulates the way that this program can break down those barriers and allow you to focus on making the difference and becoming the civil rights attorney that you want to be. Thank you for that. Traelon, what do you wish that you knew then, when you applied to the Marshall-Motley Scholars Program? What do you wish that you knew then, that you know now?

Traelon: I feel like that's a loaded question.

Angela: Yeah, it is, it is, but it's a fair one.
Traelon: Yeah, it is. For me, I'm a fifth-generation Texan, and I love Texas, even when Texas doesn't love me back, but I, so I wish I knew beforehand ... I saw one of the questions, sort of the stipulations on what counts and what doesn't count, and specifically, the LDF doesn't have very many partners in Texas, but they are growing. And so as a result, I had to spend my summer in New Orleans, which is my second home, because as I mentioned, I went to undergrad there. So I wish I knew who the partners were prior to, and specifically what the work is that we have to do. Well, I knew that, but it seems that there is a sort of a limit on who's doing what work right now. So a number of civil rights, a lot of the civil rights litigation is for inmates on death row. So capital cases. Ashley and I did a lot of Fourth Amendment cases, about policing. And as I've said to a number of the scholars, and to Ms. Kimbrough, I don't have the stomach for some of those things. It is just very disheartening. I prefer something that is just as impactful, but a little less, a little less painful, such as voting rights or, voting rights, juvenile justice, educational quality, which we have the opportunity to do now.

But because Ashley and I are part of the first cohort, we had to go through some of those growing pains. And I think the scholars after us will have the benefit of an expanded partners, expanded group of partners, as well as an expanded caseload. I mean, a group of cases and types of cases that they can work on. So those are some of the things that I wish I knew beforehand. These are all things that are being worked out, but the program is extremely straightforward. What you see on the website and what you hear on these webinars is what you get. The commitment is the commitment, and the goal is the goal. And so everything is pretty straightforward. I just wish I knew where I would be beforehand, but I will not say that being at the ACLU of Louisiana was a waste of my time. I think I got a great deal of knowledge in terms of how the Fourth Amendment should work and how to litigate a number of these cases. So I was grateful for that opportunity. But as I mentioned, I just love my state so much that I would spend every moment there, especially after being in California for three years in 2024, and being in new in New Orleans for three years, I'm ready to get back.

Angela: Yeah, so it sounds like there's some pros and some cons to your personal experience, and that it would've been nice to know the, you know, the programs and the partners that were available. But it also sounds like despite that, and no one's going to feel sorry for you that you were in New Orleans, sorry, but that you got good experience, and that's important, right? That, you know, this work is about training. When I was going through law school, I did an internship with a judge, and he made me sit through family law cases, and he said, you're going to write a decision on these
cases. And I felt the same way that you did, Traelon. I was like, this is too emotional. You're dealing with custody and children, you know, being taken from their parents and parents who are dealing with things where they can't provide for their children. And it wasn't the work that I needed to do, but it shows you that aspect of the judicial system.

Traelon, you said this, actually: During your internship, you got that full, rounded perspective on not just seeing a case from the outside, but seeing it from the attorney's perspective. And I think even though, even though, like, there may not be the full scope of opportunities through the program just yet, and you may not be placed in an internship doing exactly what you want to do, where you want to do, that perspective of the other aspects of civil rights, you know, it's only going to be beneficial to you. So Ashley, turning back to you, what advice do you have for students who are on this webinar now and who may be looking to apply to Marshall-Motley?

Ashley: Sure. So first, believe it, believe the hype, believe that the program is what it says it is. I, in hindsight, you know, if I had Traelon's question, I would've said, I wish I would've believed it. It took me a while to really believe that it was real. So I would first say believe, you know, believe the experience that we're sharing is real, because it almost sounds too good to be true on paper, but it really is all of those things and more.

Secondly, I'd say treat the application as a real test of whether or not you're willing to make the commitment. The application is lengthy, they ask very difficult questions, and give yourself enough time to really reflect. I found it to be an incredibly helpful exercise, almost, in thinking about my values, thinking about what motivates me and why, and if it's something that I want to commit 12 years to and beyond. So I would really encourage you to take the application process seriously and not to consider it, you know, check, check mark, check marks in check boxes, but to use it as a litmus test for whether or not you could see yourself doing the work really beyond the commitment, because it is a lifelong commitment. That is the work of a civil rights attorney.

Angela: Thank you so much for that. It sounds like the program itself has been beneficial to you both so far. And also, just going through the process of applying for the program was helpful in clarifying your passion and your commitment to doing this work. Thank you both so much for sharing your stories. I'm sure we're probably going to have some questions for you, so hang on. But I do want to turn back to Adria and get some of the program logistics down. Now that we have heard about not only the hype, but how real the hype actually is, we've got to find out, how do we apply? So, Adria.

Adria: Absolutely.
Angela: What are the components of this application process?

Adria: Yes, so I love what Ashley said about the application process. I do think it's an opportunity for a reflection and for thought about, you know, your career, your vocation, and what you're going to pursue. But as far as the components, it's very similar. It parallels, in many ways, the law school application. So there's a personal statement, there's an essay, letters of recommendation, resume, test scores, and then we also have some short answer questions as well, and a video submission, that center around the mission of our program and the commitment that we're looking for. And so in many ways it is easy to cut and paste, if you will, as I think Ashley somewhat alluded to in terms of the documents that you use for your law school application. And that certainly is a great starting point, but what people want to think about is, how do you pull the thread through in terms of your commitment to pursuing racial justice on behalf of Black communities. And that's a thread that you can weave throughout the entire application. Our video prompt, which I think kind of sums up what we're looking for, the video prompt question is, how am I currently living the life of a Marshall-Motley Scholar? And so what that suggests is certainly there's a future commitment related to this program, but what we're looking for is for people who are already on that road in ways in which they can demonstrate that commitment throughout their application that suggests that this is a path that they will continue on in the future.

Angela: OK, fantastic. And do you have any resources, are there things that folks on the webinar should take a look at? I know you mentioned the website. Are there additional resources for them as they're putting together their applications?

Adria: Absolutely. And all of those resources are contained on the website and I suspect will also be provided to you in the chat, but we have an application guide that gives descriptions about each component of the application. We also have a video on this year's application that will give you sort of the technical aspects of, OK, I'm ready to start my application for the Marshall-Motley Scholars Program, how to create the login, how to move and navigate the platform. That's something that we added this year that we hope will be of use to the applicants in making that process, at least the technical aspect of it, pretty seamless.

Angela: OK, thank you. Can we, like, so now that we've talked a little bit about the application, can you give an overview of what the selection process will look like this year?
Adria: Absolutely, so the application is open, it opened on November 1. So we are currently accepting applications for our program and for our third cohort. The application will remain open until February 6, 2023. That will be our deadline. So just one quick tip there. That means that you would need to have taken the LSAT, or the test that you will be using for application, by January. So just keep that in mind. But once we close the application, we will have a review committee that will review the applications, and then finalists will be selected, and that process will happen around the month of March. And we are looking forward to selecting our third cohort by April of 2023.

Angela: Fantastic. So is that when those calls are going to be going out?

Adria: Yes, that's when people will be notified, after the interview, of course, which I didn't mention, but all of those who are finalists will have the opportunity to participate in an interview, which Ashley and Traelon and the other members of the program all had the opportunity to interview with a panel of civil rights attorneys, various esteemed individuals who've been doing this work and who are involved in our selection process.

Angela: OK. So it sounds like there's a two-step process. So you complete the application, you get that in, remind us again, what was the deadline for applications?

Adria: February 6, 2023.

Angela: OK, you get that in, and then, after you've submitted, you may be selected as a finalist. And if you are selected as a finalist, there will be an interview process with a panel of attorneys, and then after that process, you will be notifying the folks who have been selected for the next cohort. And that is done with those fabulous calls that we saw in the video. And that will be what timeframe, Adria?

Adria: By April of 2023.

Angela: By April 2023. Fantastic. All right, so now we are going to turn to you all on the webinar and we are going to spend some time answering questions that you have about the program. I'm going to ask for some support from my LSAC colleagues. I've got Ferris Smith and Javier Maymi-Perez on the line. Ferris, Javier, do we have any questions?

Ferris Smith: Yes, the first question that I see is: How much influence does one's LSAT score have on the selection process?

Angela: Adria, that's yours.
Adria: I love this question. I love when it comes, because we in our program have had the opportunity to define and redefine merit for the purposes of our program. And so while the test score is a part of the application, it is something that is viewed only by our internal team. Our review committee never sees the score, and they evaluate the application based upon our definition of merit, which means demonstrated commitments to the pursuit of racial justice on behalf of Black communities. And so the score is used only to assess and confirm viability for law school admissions. And once that confirmation has been established, the committee and those who will be reviewing applications and interviewing finalists will never see the LSAT score.

Angela: All right. Fantastic. And speaking on behalf of LSAC, that is how we actually advise schools on using the LSAT, as one part of a holistic application, right? You're not defined by your score, you're defined by who you are. And there are so many other elements to being successful in law school and in practice that the LSAT score is one aspect of a holistic application. Fantastic. Ferris, what other questions do we have?

Ferris: A student asks: If we are choosing to take a gap year, should we apply this cycle, or wait until next year?

Adria: Yes, so if you are taking a gap year, you should wait to submit your application. Your application for the Marshall-Motley Scholars Program should be submitted in the same year that you are applying for law school.

Angela: Adria, just to follow up on that, and this may or not be a fair question, but how many cohorts will there be of Marshall-Motley if folks are trying to plan out and if they're thinking about a gap year? Do you have a sense of that as of yet?

Adria: Yes, it is a fair question. So the initial tremendous gift that we received was to fund this program for five cohorts. So we are in currently in the process of selecting cohort three, so there would be two to follow, but I believe that there's potential for it to be extended beyond that. Don't quote me on that. I say that as I know it's being recorded, but I'm hopeful that we will be able to continue beyond the fifth cohort. But as we sit here today, we have funding and support for five cohorts.

Angela: OK, five cohorts. But one thing I learned about you, Adria, is your belief is strong. When you say that you have belief, that gives me some trust in that, but I know you cannot make any promises. So we're looking at two additional cohorts after this cohort so people can plan accordingly. If you're going to take that gap year or two,
there's guaranteed funding for two more cohorts after this application. So just keep that in mind for your long-term planning. All right, Ferris.

Javier Maymi-Perez: I have a question.

Angela: Oh oh, Javier's, all right! Thank you for jumping in. Sorry.

Javier: Sorry, no, it's because I've seen this question a couple of times already. It's, I guess it's for Adria, is there age restriction for this scholarship?

Adria: So, no, there isn't. There's no age restriction, there's no, there's no background restrictions at all. Age, race, where you're from, there are no restrictions at all. The key with this program is your commitment, your demonstrated commitment on behalf of Black communities in pursuit of racial justice and commitment to the South. And I think both scholars that we have on the panel are great examples of that. You've got Traelon, who is going to be K through JD, as they call it, you know, gone straight from undergrad to law school. And then of course Ashley shared her experience graduating from undergrad and then working in D.C. for several years in policy work. And I wouldn't say this if she hadn't said it, but she talked about starting law school at 30, and certainly you see the range there. But there's no, you know, high or low, there's no restriction there at all. And in fact, I would mention this because it often comes up, you can also attend law school at the school of your choice. There are no restrictions there either. I think oftentimes because our mission is so centered around the South, people assume that you can only go to law school in the South. Of course you see Ashley is in the South, but Traelon's on the West Coast, and it can be any range of schools. The beautiful thing and privilege that the scholars have is they can choose the law school that is the best fit for them, regardless of ranking, regardless of geographic location, the place where they think they'll be able to survive and thrive as a law student.

Angela: Thank you. Javier, any additional questions from you?

Javier: Yeah, there's actually quite a few.

Angela: All right.

Javier: And this one is, I've seen this question a couple of times already: For people who are taking the LSAT in January, in the process of their law school applications. And the question, I guess it's capsuled in, do you have to be admitted to an ABA-accredited school to be eligible?
Adria: Not at the time of your application, no. Ultimately, of course, we're looking for people to be admitted to law school before they can be selected for this program. But at the time of your application, you do not have to be accepted to an ABA-accredited law school.

Angela: OK, so let me just clarify that, so that, you know, folks get it. So it sounds like admission to the program is contingent on being accepted. So at the time that you apply to the Marshall-Motley Scholars Program, you don't need to be accepted, and most likely you won't be, if you're applying now, but if you get to be a finalist, and Adria, please, you know, correct me or add in there, if you get to be a finalist, that there is an expectation that you will need to be accepted into an ABA-accredited law school in order to accept.

Adria: That is correct, thank you, Angela, for summing that up.

Angela: Yep. Absolutely.

Christina: I wanted to just jump in with another question, I'm Christina with MMSP.

Angela: Yeah, thank you, Christina.

Christina: Someone else asked: Is this program primarily centered around civil rights as far as the criminal justice system? Or are you allowed to address injustices within the health care system, educational system and other institutions? Someone is also asking about the intersection of race and gender and if they'd be allowed to explore that area as well.

Angela: Great questions. Thanks for jumping in, Christina.

Christina: No problem.

Adria: Yeah, thanks, Christina, for that. So the practice of civil rights law is changing and it's evolving. It's changed in many ways from 1940, when the Legal Defense Fund was founded, to today. There's all kinds of intersectionality, and there is room for that within this program, even within the Legal Defense Fund. So a part of the work that we do is around the criminal legal system, but it's also education, it's also voting rights, it's also economic justice, which intersects with housing and health care and employment. And so, you know, the way that we look at civil rights very much is an interdisciplinary area of the law that touches on so many areas of life. And we have students who are in this program as scholars who have those interests as well. And we look to support that,
even with our internship offerings. Traelon sort of alluded to the ways in which that program is evolving. And so now we're even looking at, you know, environmental law, environmental justice, intersectionality, because we have students who have that interest. And so that's a very long way to say yes, there is the flexibility for the intersectionality that we're talking about with so many other areas of law.

**Angela:** That is really great to hear, Adria, because I think we all know that racism and discrimination and the things that Black folks in the South deal with touches so many aspects of life. You know, it's not just one system, it's all of them. And it includes those environmental injustices, inequities and all of that. So that is incredible that the program is evolving to meet scholars' needs and interests, but also the deep need of folks, of Black folks in the South. So thank you for doing that work. Other questions for my colleagues, either at Marshall-Motley or LSAC?

**Javier:** Yeah, there's a couple of questions about citizenship and folks who are in the DACA status, if they would be eligible, if Adria could address that.

**Adria:** Yes, thanks for that, Javier. So, we do require work eligibility for our program, because there is an internship and a work requirement, and unfortunately, at least at this point, we are not in a position to be able to sponsor people for that. And so we are looking for citizenship at this point, or permanent residency that would allow an individual to be able to work to fulfill the requirement of the program.

**Angela:** Thank you. Christina, Ferris, what else are you seeing in the chat?

**Christina:** Let's see, I'm not sure if this one will apply, but we have a question from Candace, for Ashley or Traelon, and she wants to know: Do female clients require special legal services? What courses have you taken that helped to prepare you to support families, parents, or children, especially during your internship, if that is applicable?

**Angela:** That's a very interesting question and I'd love to expand that a little bit more for you both. You know, what has prepared you to deal with clients from different backgrounds and identities, if you could? Traelon, Ashley, which one of you want to start with that question?

**Ashley:** Traelon, would you like to start?

**Angela:** Traelon, you're up [laughs].
Traelon: Oh, OK, so Berkeley is one of the most diverse institutions in the country. Berkeley has a great and enormous amount of respect for all people. And so our classes are centered around diversity and inclusion and equity. So the lens in which our classes are taught are for respect to people from different backgrounds. But I've taken legal professions, which is the ethics course that is required for students who will be taking the bar and all law students. But I took that before working this summer. So I had that background. There were some instances where we had to deal with people, as I mentioned, what Ashley and I did was Fourth Amendment police brutality, excessive force, unlawful search and seizure. And we had instances where there were touchy subjects. Obviously if the police officer is, you know, beating you or using excessive force in front of your family members or your children, those are sensitive subjects, and we had to use extra care and caution in that. But I don't know that we had to have gender-specific, gender-specific precautions, or we didn't have to place any extra measures for people based on their gender. Not to my knowledge. I think there are instances in cases, in civil rights and social justice, where you should and are required to. And not only are you required to, but it is just better to, but I have not had that experience yet. But I think that law school will prepare you for that. Well, I don't think law school will prepare you for that, but I think the culture of law school will prepare you for that. I don't think professors themselves will prepare you for that, but I think the culture will.

Angela: Thank you. Ashley, anything to add to that?

Ashley: Sure. I think Traelon summarized our summer experience really well. The only thing I would add, I think is that the summer experience, the partners actually were very helpful to me. And then I think that's reflective of other people in the cohort's experience as well, which is you're not only working on developing your legal writing and your legal research skills, but it's about being community-oriented and understanding how to interact with clients, how to talk to, you know, community members about difficult topics. And so there was additionally some, you know, client-facing work that we did in our internship experience that I know others in the cohort had as well. And lastly, I would just say personal experience. This is a place to shine, I think, in the application, where some of these skills are developed either through, you know, family relationships, or, you know, work that's done on campus through extracurricular activities, or work that's done in a professional setting that I found to be helpful. But I would agree with Traelon that outside of law school can maybe be the most effective place to develop some of those skills.
**Angela:** Thank you so much for that. And just I'll add from the LSAC perspective, because we are extremely committed to advancing DEI in law and legal education, that one of the things that we are working on and what we do is, we help support law schools in this and we are developing programming curriculum that schools can use to help with professional identity formation and helping students think about, how do you engage with clients from all different backgrounds and all different needs. Because that's an important part of being an effective attorney in the 21st century. You've got to know how to empathize and relate to your clients to provide them with the best service. I think we have time for one more question.

**Javier:** I have one.

**Angela:** Let's pick a good one. Pick a good one, Javier.

**Javier:** OK. And this is several people, again asking similar questions regarding LSAT, which, by the way, registration's open for January until December 1, regarding their LSAT scores. Given that the score release will be very early in February or people are retaking the test, when do they need to have those scores?

**Angela:** Adria, that's for you.

**Adria:** Yes, by the 6th of February. I mean, as long as they've got an LSAT score by February 6, which is the application deadline, they should be in good shape.

**Angela:** All right, fantastic. We have just a few minutes, and I want to make sure we summarize. So this question is actually for Traelon and Ashley, the two of you, and Adria, I will give you a quick final word, but I do want to ask the both of you, and Ashley, I'll start with you. What have you learned about yourself going through the process of applying for the Marshall-Motley Scholars Program? You know, completing your first year in the internship, what have you learned about yourself?

**Ashley:** Oh, wow. Thank you for the question. I think I've learned what, wow, that's such a great question. I've learned to be very open-minded about what growth looks like, especially as somebody who worked for eight years before law school, to give myself grace, which I think the program facilitates, and I've learned that pursuing civil rights work is a lifelong endeavor in the sense that it involves growing my emotional capacity, it involves growing my intellectual capacity, and really embracing growth. Growth has really been the theme of 1L, the theme of the summer. And I'm really grateful to the program for the freedom to do that.
Angela: Thank you so much. And Traelon, how about you? What have you learned about yourself?

Traelon: Yeah, I'll answer the first part of the question, which I remember to be about the application process. I think the application process for me, I learned, for me the application was extremely, I want to say easy, but maybe easy's not the word I'm looking for. It wasn't challenging or difficult, because, as I stated, this was what I've been doing. So for me, the questions were questions that were easy for me to answer, because I knew I had done the work, was going to do the work, and whether or not I got chosen, was going to continue to do the work on behalf of people in the South. And so for me, it was cementing and reassuring to know that what I was doing, what I had already done, was what they were looking for. And people were willing to pay to do the things that I had done for free for so many years. And so for me, it was reassuring to know that, that what I was doing was impactful, and the application process just made me feel, it made me feel great. And so for every amount of greatness I felt in the application process, law school just snatched it all away.

Angela: Fantastic.

Traelon: So I learned, like Ashley, what growth looks like in this season. And for me it's reassuring also to know that being in California, which is completely different from Texas, that you could still find something, a silver lining. So for me, the internship in law school taught me to be present in the moment and take what you can get from that moment. I didn't want to be in Louisiana this summer. I didn't want to be doing police brutality work. I didn't want to be in California. But these are all decisions that I chose and these are decisions that I will take for life. And so, be the moment and be present is what I learned.

Angela: Yes, that there's something to learn from every moment, that you give yourself grace in the process and that you will grow. Growth is so important. And that you will grow into the leaders that you're meant to be as civil rights attorneys. I will, in 30 seconds, Adria, could you please just give us final words about the program and some encouragement for students who are looking to apply?

Adria: Final words is one of the taglines we've been using, and it's "Yes, you." So there are individuals who may be out there, who are thinking, wow, this sounds amazing, but I don't know. You may be having doubts for whatever reason. Remove the doubts from your mind, apply for this program, shoot your shot, give yourself the chance. Yes, you
are the one that we are looking for. Give yourself the opportunity to have this experience, and we look forward to receiving your application on or before February 6. Yes, you.

**Angela:** Yes, you. Fantastic. Thank you so much, panelists, Adria, Ashley, Traelon, thank you so much, and to my colleagues, and Christina from LDF, thanks for your support, and also, thanks to each and every one of you for showing up and participating in this. Remember those words from Adria Kimbrough: Yes, you. This is about you, and if you want and are interested, please do apply and consider this. We need this work, we need you in the profession. There will be follow-up after this. This is being recorded, and you'll have access to that. There are also additional resources available on LSAC's website, LSAC.org. Please feel free to check us out and it's been my pleasure to host this conversation. I hope it's been beneficial. Thank you all so much.

**Announcer:** Visit LSAC.org to learn more.

[upbeat music fades out]